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Legal Aid Agency Is Over a Third of the Way to its \$4 Million Fund-Raising Goal

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Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, an agency that provides free legal help in civil cases to poor people in 21 counties, launched a \$4 million fund-raising campaign last week to increase its ability to help needy Missourians.

The agency has firm pledges of \$1,381,600, almost 35 percent of its target, officials said.

Every year, Legal Services turns away thousands of people who seek assistance, including many who say they are being denied access to housing, education, employment and health care, agency officials said. Agency officials say they hope they eventually will be able to serve everyone who seeks their services with the help of the fund-raising drive, which seeks gifts from local companies and people.

Half the money will be used for program support, and half will be used to begin an endowment fund.

The endowment will help the organization continue to help in hard economic times or when public funding sources are cut, officials said. Federal and state money for free legal services is dwindling as elected officials face tightening budgets, officials said.

For information or to contribute, call 314-534-4200.